

Indiana Department of Environmental Management

Lori F. Kaplan, Commissioner

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(Text does not include verbatim comments)

Thank you for your kind welcome this morning.

It is good to be here and have the opportunity to focus on something a little different for a change.

As I'm sure most of you know, my agency has been dealing with a contamination event of the White River which resulted in an extensive fish kill. The past month to six weeks has been difficult, frustrating, and filled with very long days for both me and my staff. Some days have been so long that I think that I've crossed paths with myself between home and work!

Fortunately for the people of Indiana, IDEM has many dedicated employees who have devoted countless hours to finding out what happened, how it happened, who is responsible and, most importantly, we want to learn from this incident so that it's not repeated in the future. I hope that however we as individuals in this room today view the environment, we can all agree that what happened to the stretch of the White River between Anderson and Indianapolis was horrible, unacceptable and that the responsible party must be held accountable for its actions.

But like the coming of spring, there is a great deal of optimism for the renewal of life in the White River. IDEM biologists, along with their colleagues from the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, are cautiously hopeful that the White River will once again teem with fish and the river will once again become anglers' best kept little secret. As my agency continues its investigation into what happened, the Department of Natural Resources is already undertaking a detailed assessment of the damage done to the river, and, together we are laying the foundation for its restoration. We will need the help and cooperation of all Hoosiers in this endeavor.

This incident has, I hope, made Hoosiers aware of how sensitive the environment is and that an incident many miles away, has a direct effect on their lives. If there is a silver-lining in this event, it is their heightened awareness about the environment, about water quality, and the need to protect it.

And for better or for worse, IDEM and your industry are inextricably linked in protecting our environment. We are each other's customer. As you hopefully have heard before today, the Indiana Department of Environmental Management's mission is to make Indiana a cleaner, healthier place to live. And the term "healthy" does not just pertain to the quality of the air we breath or the water we drink; but it also pertains to the quality of life which is inextricably linked to the economic health of the state.

To accomplish this mission, IDEM continually balances the measures it imposes on industry to protect the environment with industry's need to fulfill its crucial role in the American economy. And nothing better typifies how IDEM tries to achieve its mission than how it interacts with your association. It is possible for America's industrial engine to power this dynamic economy while also protecting the environment for ourselves and, more importantly, for our children's children.

I have learned a lot in my ten months as commissioner and while I have not yet had the opportunity to interact with your industry to a great extent - and some may think that is a good thing - I know that several members of my staff have worked extensively with members of your association on air emission and reuse issues. Working together, we have found several uses for foundry sand, including structural fill and road base, and together my staff is working with the leaders of this association to develop acceptable standards for the use of foundry sand as a soil amendment.

I certainly applaud these efforts to find beneficial reuses of waste materials which divert them from taking up landfill space. It is very important that we work together to find such solutions and assure that we do not create one environmental problem while solving another. In that vein, I believe it is very important that all producers of waste understand the characteristics of their waste and manage it accordingly.

While many of the sands from foundry operations appear to be innocuous, it is important that you not take them for granted and assume they do not represent any type of environmental threat. The good news is that a great deal is known about the characteristics of different waste streams from your industry and which ones could exhibit hazardous characteristics. I encourage you to work with your association to identify the problem wastes and to assure that you are managing them properly.

As you may know, IDEM and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency are organized by media - not the news media, newspaper, TV and radio (with whom I have had a lot of contact over the past few weeks) - but environmental media - the offices of air, water and land. This division of labor directly reflects the manner in which environmental regulation has evolved from the separate statutes which have been enacted to protect our environment: The Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, the Solid Waste Disposal Act, and the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act. But while environmental regulatory agencies tend, because of their histories and as a matter of convenience, to continue to segregate the handling of the various media specific permits, businesses increasingly must focus on their overall environmental performance, which requires a multimedia perspective.

In recent years, the EPA and the states have wrestled with the idea of developing multimedia permitting. While the regulated community has expressed some curiosity about this approach, there has not been any widespread support for developing multimedia permits. Similarly, most regulatory bodies have concluded that multimedia permits might prove too complex and resource intensive.

Nonetheless, IDEM believes there is merit to adding a multimedia perspective to the permitting process. To that end, we have developed, and will soon unveil a multimedia permit guide.

Written in plain English, this new Internet-based information tool will provide basic information on all IDEM-issued permits, including who may need a permit, what steps must be taken to obtain or modify a permit, what to expect from IDEM during the permitting process and, most importantly, how to obtain additional information on how to complete the process. Our vision as we began to develop this multimedia permit guide was to create a user-friendly, easy-to-understand tool for businesses and citizens alike. Again, the Web site will help businesses determine what permits or approvals they require for their particular operation. For citizens, it will help them learn what permits or approvals their business neighbors are required to have. When this permit guide is up, you can find it with a hot link off of IDEM's Homepage at: www.state.in.us/idem.

We plan to unveil this permit guide in about two to three weeks, so please try it out and give us your feedback. You can send us your comment from IDEM's Homepage. Again, this multimedia permitting guide is an example of how IDEM is trying to help members of your association and we need your feedback to improve upon it.

In addition, IDEM also has adopted a more multimedia approach to tracking certain permitting projects of significant environmental impact or public interest. For example, we try to ensure that all the permitting managers from the various media area are kept up-to-date on the progress of all the various permitting activities for that project. For two recent permitting projects - to allow medical waste to be burned at the Ogden-Martin Indianapolis incinerator and to approve the new non-incineration technology for the destruction of VX nerve agent at the U.S. Army Depot in Newport - IDEM held multimedia public meetings and multimedia public notice periods. And, as a result of this approach, we managed to issue several permits simultaneously to these facilities.

Another effort at IDEM that I would like to take this opportunity to highlight is the 100 % Club. With the help of an external advisory group, made up of citizens and business and municipal leaders, including your current executive director, Blake Jeffery, IDEM created a new program to help protect Indiana's environment.

The 100% Club recognizes facilities that are able to achieve full compliance with environmental regulations. Businesses and municipalities that achieve full compliance not only help protect the environment, but also allow IDEM to spend less time and money reviewing their operations. Facilities that achieve full compliance with environmental standards during the preceding calendar year are eligible for cost-saving measures and public recognition. Those facilities that not only achieve full compliance, but also go above and beyond their environmental requirements are eligible to become 100% Club Environmental Leaders. At this level, facilities will receive annual permit fee credits as well as other possible benefits in recognition of their good record of environmental stewardship. My time this morning is limited but you can find out more about the 100 % Club by going to IDEM's homepage at www.state.in.us/idem and click on the "What's New" button. Scroll down a few lines where you will see a link to the 100 % Club. It provides a full description of this program, which I hope all of you in this room will want to avail yourselves of. Also, we are currently accepting applications for those who want to participate. Applications are being accepted up until March 31 for this calendar year and are available on our web page.

In conclusion, everyday we have to concern ourselves about our choices in our lives about how we conduct our personal lives and our businesses in a way that protects the environment. When we protect the environment, we protect ourselves and, most of all, we protect our loved ones. Protecting our air, land, and water need not be and should not be an effort that pits the environment against industry or the environment against our personal lives. As I noted earlier in my remarks, our mission at IDEM is to make Indiana a cleaner, healthier place to live, but we can't do it by ourselves. We need the help of your industry and of all business as well as the personal commitment of every Hoosier. Together, we will fashion an environment that is both friendly to the earth, its protective atmosphere and its life-giving water, and also allows business to flourish.

Thank you.